STUDIES IN THE FAITHS

# ISLAM

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*STUDIES IN THE FAITHS.* II.

# ISLAM

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PEARL MOSQUE, AGRA.

# ISLAM

BY

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1905

LONDON

J. M. DENT & CO.

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,
BREAD STREET HILL, E.C., AND
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

# PREFACE

PERHAPS mutual understanding and sympathy are more difficult between Christianity and Islam than between any two of the world's living Faiths. On the side of Islam is the too-little remembered fact that the only Christianity of which she is, so to speak, officially conscious, is the least true, the least pure ; while on the Christian side, we tend to turn even from such points of contact as exist between ourselves and this latest of the Faiths with an undefined shrinking from the possibility of sympathy : the prophet repels us, the religion repels us, the moral code repels us, the history repels us. When we discover that Islam claims to supersede Christianity, we are filled with indignation and horror. When we discover, as we do at intervals, how dark the darkness of

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Muslim lands and how cruel the tender mercies of Muslim rule may be, we desire nothing better than that Islam should be blotted from off the face of the earth.

But Islam is still a world power, before which the Christian nations of Europe have stood helpless even while fellow-Christians have been cruelly and wickedly entreated. Islam cannot be ignored nor despised. Rather it is imperative that it should be studied, if possible with sympathy, by the Christian peoples, in order that the Muslim motive power may be understood, and that Islam may be met face to face, as it must one day be met by Christianity, worthily and Christianly. What if the inevitable battle should be fought by the armies of the Cross, rather than by the armies of the Nations ?

This little book has been prepared, not primarily as a study of Islam, but rather to indicate directions which Christian, and especially Missionary, thought might

profitably take. For the sake of those who have not already some knowledge of Islam itself, or of its doctrines as they compare with those of our own Faith, the chapters have followed these two lines ; but matters of great importance to the special student have been necessarily omitted ; and others have been very lightly touched upon. For the guidance of any who are desirous of making a more exhaustive study of this most important of all subjects, to those who have at heart the honour of Christ and His speedy reign, there is available a very large literature, in English, German, and French, upon Islam and its relation to Christianity.

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# I

# ISLAM

## In the Name of the Most Merciful God.

*Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds—*
*The most merciful—*
*The King of the day of Judgment.*
*Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help.*
*Guide Thou us in the straight way—*
*In the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious—*
*With whom Thou art not angry—*
*And who go not astray. Amen.*

The great Prayer of Islam.

## The Apostle of Islam.

" *By the brightness of the morning,*
*and by the night when it groweth dark—*
*Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee,*
*Neither doth He hate thee.*
*Verily the life to come shall be better for thee*
*than this present life,*
*and thy Lord shall give thee a reward*
*with which thou shalt be well pleased.*

" *Did He not find thee an orphan,*
*and hath He not taken care of thee ?*
*Did He not find thee wandering in error,*
*and hath He not guided thee into the truth ?*
*Did He not find thee needy,*
*and hath He not enriched thee ?*
*Wherefore oppress not the orphan, neither*
*repulse the beggar,*
*but declare the goodness of the Lord.*"

Sura xcvi.

THERE is in the story of Islam an interest quite unique ; it is the work of one unaided mind, the mind of a man unlettered and ignorant, who came of an isolated people, and who gained such knowledge as he had of the great world from hearsay as he travelled between Central Arabia and Syria in charge of the merchant caravan of his mistress. This man, morally very frail to our thinking, is all but divine to two hundred millions of men and women. His word is final to them ; it alone reveals God, it alone guides life, it alone commands all Muslim rulers, and it defies Christianity as no other power has done.

Muhammad lived six hundred years after Christ, his Faith came into existence in full view of Christianity, it publicly claims to be a higher revelation and to supersede Christianity ; and the Christian nations have not yet disproved the claim. The attempt has not indeed been made, unless we reckon the chivalrous and ill-fated

missions of the Crusades to redeem the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the Muslim. Whether Christianity realizes the fact of her failure in this respect, or not, Islam is fully conscious of it.

Muhammad—the Praised One—was born at Mecca on August 29th, 570 A.D. He was left an orphan while still a little child, and was adopted by an uncle. Later he became steward to a lady of Mecca, Khadija, who asked him to become her husband, and was, until her death, his faithful and loving wife. This marriage procured for Muhammad that which he coveted above all things, leisure for the study of the things of God. Muhammad

The time was past when the idolatrous worship of his tribe—the religious tribe of Arabia—had any meaning for him. He had had glimpses of a purer, a more satisfying Faith. Both Jews and Christians had crossed his path, who had spoken or the one God: Creator, Ruler, Provider;

and the idea had seized and held his imagination. Upon this idea he now meditated in his chosen retreat, a cave near Mecca, until it possessed him ; he dreamed dreams and saw visions, and at length came forth to make them known, being assured that he had been called to proclaim the reign of the one only God upon earth.

The Call

But the people of Mecca, custodians of the religious traditions of Arabia, would have none of this new doctrine ; they fiercely opposed the preacher, and very soon drove him and his little company of disciples (of whom his wife had been the first) from the city.

Rejection

The *Hajrat*, or Flight, from which dates the Muhammadan era, took place on July 16th, 622 A.D.

Flight

A refuge was found in the rival city of Madina.

At Madina, Muhammad found leisure to mature and carry out the Idea which had now possessed him that he should found a

Madina

Reign of God upon the earth. "Behind the quiet and unobtrusive exterior," writes Sir William Muir, "lay hid a resolve, a strength and fixedness of will, a sublime determination, destined to achieve the marvellous work of bowing towards himself the heart of all Arabia as the heart of one man." There is, to the sympathetic student of his life, nothing wonderful in the hold which Muhammad took upon his followers. He mastered men by the force of his iron will, and then won them by the force of his noble and generous nature.

Character

Many words have been wasted upon the problems of the character of this sixth-century Prophet, and it is not intended to enter upon them here. It must be remembered that if the vision of Muhammad was world-wide while his personal life remained at the limit of his time and his isolated race, there are not lacking similar examples elsewhere of great leaders whose private lives we explain by their generation

and surroundings ; also, it is probably wise, that until we know and are able to sympathize with the Arabic character, we of the West should say little in way of condemnation, all the more that condemnation of the Prophet is not the method to win men from his allegiance.

Personal Claim

There is a far more important question which may not be passed over. Did Muhammad realize the *personal* claim involved in his religious message ? Was his soul so pre-occupied with the grand Idea that his own relation to it was not at first apparent ? For, it cannot be forgotten that from the beginning the second Article of the Muslim Creed was inherent in the first. God is known as God to the Muslim only because the Apostle of God has proclaimed Him to be God. Muhammad is the Revealer of God, and God is God. This is the true and inevitable order.

This claim, as a foundation of belief, was

the source of success of the arms of Islam in the past, and is the living power of Islam to-day ; at the same time, it was and is the test of the man and of his message. Is Muhammad the Revealer of God ? There is possible one answer only to the question, so far as the disciples of the Christ Whom he claimed to supersede are concerned ; but the answer does not end the story of the relation between Christianity and the Arabian Prophet. Would that it did !

Death

Muhammad died at Madina on June 9th, 632 A.D., in his sixty-second year. His death was peace. His last words were, " The blessed Companionship on high."

The dead hand

Being dead this man still rules. In all human history there is no more striking illustration of the might of the " dead hand " than is presented in Islam.

## I. GOD.

*La-ilaha-Il-lal-laho. There is no God save God.*

*"Say, God is one God; the eternal God: He begetteth not, neither is begotten: There is not any one like unto Him.*

*"Dost thou not know that God is almighty? Dost thou not know that unto God belongeth the Kingdom of Heaven? neither have ye any protector or helper except God.*

*"To God belongeth the East and the West; therefore wheresoever ye turn yourselves to pray, there is the face of God; for God is omnipresent and omniscient.*

*"Your God is one God, there is no God but He, the most merciful."*

It was with a very simple message, apparently, that Muhammad came forth from his long meditation in his lonely cave. The message was not even original. Not only had Arab mystics already dreamt of the aloneness of God, but there were Jews and Christians, inheritors of the same supreme truth, settled here and there over the land; and Muhammad had come into

contact with both during his early Syrian journeys. The Idea had become familiar to him long before.

The God of Muhammad

But, the God of Muhammad's contemplations was not the God of Judaism, nor the God of Christianity ; he deliberately rejected both Faiths. True, God is Spirit, God is one, God is alone, God is Creator ; He is the al-knowing, al-present, al-governing One. High attributes are ascribed to Him, as in the ninety-nine Names which the pious Mussulman reverently repeats with the aid of his string of beads ; but neither these, nor the various attributes ascribed to Him in the Quran itself, largely affect the Muslim conception of God.

The God of Muhammad is a Being of two supreme characteristics. He is the supreme Will, and His Will is carried into effect by His supreme Power.

Will : absolute, eternal, unchanging ; far above such human distinctions as right

and wrong, justice and injustice. That which the Will of God ordains, that is right, just, and final.

Power: so unrestrained, so awful, carries that Will into effect, that there exists no will or power save God's alone. That which is ordained, good or evil, righteous or unrighteous in man's poor view, is of God. He is the only Doer. "*In the creation of heaven and earth, and in the ship which sails on the sea . . .* ALL IS GOD." All creatures, even man, are in the awful grip of this great Spirit, helpless; they do that which He ordains, that and no other.

"Why are you so naughty?"

"God knows."

The reply of the little child is the reply of Islam to all problems. It is the secret of the awful fatalism which paralyzes men's emotions and will. Two countenances remain, after many years, vividly impressed upon my memory; that of a man, guilty of crime and under severe sentence, whom

no appeal could move from his perfect serenity. He was not a hardened criminal; he was simply convinced that God was the Doer of the deed and he himself only the instrument for the carrying out of His will. The other was a father, carrying in his arms a dearly-loved little child to the grave. He moved rapidly down the crowded street at the head of the procession of mourners, unconscious either of curiosity or of sympathy around him. The set grim expression might have suggested the idea of Spartan endurance, save for the deep eyes which gazed into the far distance, and told unmistakably of the submission of a strong will to a Stronger, the will of his God.

This awful God has taken hold of the imagination of all Islam. He was very real to the Prophet, and the Prophet has communicated his faith to those who have followed him. Mussulmans may be, in our sense, bad men, but they are rarely

irreligious men. There are no atheists in Islam. A man who, under the influence of English secular education, lightly declared that he had grown beyond so childish a superstition, which however he declared to be "good for women and children," changed countenance while we discussed the religious education of his wife. He could not rid himself easily of the convictions of his childhood, as the grave face and reverent voice bore witness.

But, the Will of God is far more present in the thought of the Muslim than is God Himself. God touches his life through His Will only. God is apart; seeing, knowing and judging indeed, but apart in His absolute sovereignty, in the inexorable way in which He carries out His Purpose. We have, therefore, as a corrolary to the teaching regarding the Will, the teaching of the pitiful helplessness of man in His Hand. God may crush me; He can do it; I can say nothing. In

conversation with a woman on one occasion reference was made to the Christian doctrine of the assurance of the child relation with God. She exclaimed, "Surely that is blasphemy; it is almost like saying *what the Will of God for you is.* If saved, God is merciful; if cast into *Jahannam* (hell), God is just."

ISLAM means resignation, submission, homage, to this Will of God. The relation of the Muslim to his God is truly expressed in the word.

Thus early do Christ and Muhammad part company.

## 2. THE WORD OF GOD.

"*It is He Who hath sent down unto you the book of the Quran, distinguishing between good and evil; and they to whom We gave the scripture know that it is sent down from thy Lord, with truth; Be not therefore one of those who doubt thereof. The words of the Lord are*

*perfect in truth and justice ; there is none who can change His words ; He both heareth and knoweth.*"

The Will of God is supreme in His universe ; Islam tells in one word the relation of the Faithful to that Will ; and the Will is revealed to men in its final form
Quran the Quran. The Quran descended from highest heaven complete, and was passed on by the Angel to the Prophet Sura by Sura, as its message was required. The Quran supersedes all other scriptures, it is the eternal Divine Word ; there is no further truth to be revealed, for this is literally the last word of God to man. The human language medium is Arabic, and as each several word is an Act of God, the very words are sacred. There cannot, therefore, be any authorized translation of the Quran ; and, as in its completeness it is one undivided message, to issue it in parts would be grievous sin. The book is published and used in many lands, and passes through many hands, but so great

has been the care that it should be preserved perfect, that it is believed to be practically unchanged since the scattered leaves were gathered reverently together after the Prophet's death. There is no doctrine of inspiration so high as this.

### 3. THE THOUGHT OF SIN.

"*Man chooseth to be wicked for the time which is before him. He asketh, When shall the day of resurrection be? But when the night shall be dazzled, and the moon shall be eclipsed, and the sun and the moon shall be in conjunction, on that day man shall say, Where is a place of refuge? By no means; there shall be no place to fly unto. With thy Lord shall be a sure mansion of rest in that day; on that day shall man be told that which he hath done, first and last. Yea, a man shall be an evidence against himself; and though he offer his excuses, they shall not be received.*"

"*There shall every soul experience that which it shall have sent before it.*"

As is the God so are His worshippers; and the conception of the religious life in

Islam follows naturally upon the conception of God. Thus, sin is terrible, but not first as a deviation from a standard of absolute righteousness; it is terrible because it is rebellion against an awful majesty. This is fundamental. Yet to say that Islam is non-moral, that sin is an arbitrary term, and that reward and punishment are in the hands of an arbitrary God, is not the whole truth. There are two kinds of sin (reminding us of the Roman Catholic doctrine), sin greater and lesser. Among the greater sins are

Sin

Unfaithfulness to God.
Despair of the mercy of God, or
Too strong an assurance of God's mercy.
False witness when on oath.
The practice of magic.
Drunkenness.
Theft.
Usury.
Murder.
Disobedience to parents.

Flight before unbelievers in battle.

Seizing the property of the orphan.

And the constant repetition of lesser sins becomes a greater sin.

Lesser sins are very many, and are not enumerated; among them are gambling, the use of images in worship, and slander. Punishment awarded by the law is very severe; the punishment awarded by God is as He shall ordain. The future has a great share in the thought of the people of the East; they are less materialistic, less bound up in the present life than those of the West. Therefore the present life is more affected by the future possibilities, and in the case of a larger proportion of men and women than is the case with us.

### 4. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

"*The striking. What is the striking? and what shall make thee to understand how terrible the striking will be? On that day men shall be like moths scattered abroad, and*

*the mountains shall be like carded wool of various colours driven by the wind ; moreover, he whose balance shall be heavy with good works shall lead a pleasing life ; but as to him whose balance shall be light his dwelling shall be the pit of hell. What shall make thee to understand how frightful the pit of hell is ? It is a burning fire.*"

Judgment

Much has been said and written about the Muslim Paradise, and there are indeed no parts of the Quran so weak as those which dwell upon the sweets of the future life of the Faithful. Serious Mussulmans, when on rare occasions I have heard them refer to this subject, have invariably explained these passages as symbolical. However that may be, the passages in the Quran which teach of the day of resurrection and of judgment are frequent and solemn. No doubt the judgment of God is used as a threat against unbelievers, but it is also continually addressed to the Faithful as a motive ; and these teachings have, as I believe, far greater influence upon the life of the religious Muslim than all the promised joys of Paradise.

"*What thinkest thou of him who denieth the future judgment as a falsehood? It is he who pusheth away the orphan, and stirreth not up others to feed the poor. Woe be unto those who pray and who are negligent at their prayer; who play the hypocrites, and deny necessaries to the needy.*"

This was the message of the Arabian Apostle.

## The Religious Life in Islam.

*"Clothe not the truth with vanity,*
*neither conceal the truth against your own knowledge;*
*Observe the stated seasons of prayer,*
*and pay your legal alms,*
*and bow down yourselves with those who bow down.*
*Will ye command men to do justice,*
*and forget your own souls?*
*Yet ye read the books of the law;*
*do ye not therefore understand?"*

### I. THE REPETITION OF THE CREED.

*La iláhá Il-lal-laho, Muhammad-ur-Rasúl-Ullah.*

*God is the alone God, and Muhammad is the Apostle of God.*

Kalima

The Creed must be repeated by the true Muslim once at the least during his life-

time. This is the confession of the lips, and must be made correctly and without hesitation ; it is also the confession of the heart, and must be held till death.

### 2. THE DAILY DEVOTIONS.

*"Therefore glorify God when the evening overtaketh you, and when ye rise in the morning;*
*And unto him be praise in heaven and earth, and at sunset, and when ye rest at noon."*

There are five services of prayer daily, observed with great regularity by all religious men and women. The form is liturgical ; the word *Sulát* has rather the meaning of devotional service than of hours of prayer. The first hour is at dawn of day. The second is at noon. The third is between four and five in the afternoon. The fourth service is held as the sun disappears beneath the horizon. The fifth is at the retiring hour at night.

Sulát

Hours

Before prayer all Mussulmans cleanse face, ears and nostrils, hands and feet ;

Prepara-tion

that they may be free of all bodily pullution before entering the presence of God. Many change their garments each time they pray. The room is cleaned, and the worshipper who has cleaned the room changes his garments before engaging in the service.

Solemnity

This service of prayer in the case of serious worshippers is very touching to the sympathetic witness ; it is true, as so many critics of Islam have noted, that prayer is formal, and is repeated in an unknown tongue ; but to those who know the heart hunger which constantly finds expression in that five-times-repeated daily liturgy, who would fain change the constant refrain "God is great" for the gladder "God is love," the service, whether in the mosque, in the home, or on the wayside, is one of the most pathetic appeals addressed to the unknown God by any people.

There is no mediation ; prayer is offered directly to God, the only reference

to the Prophet being a prayer "for Muhammad and his descendants."

Prayer is always offered in the sacred language.

### 3. RAMADHÁN, THE MONTH OF FASTING.

*"O true believers, a fast is ordained you, as it was ordained to those before you, that ye may fear God. A certain number of days shall ye fast; but he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall fast an equal number of other days. And those who can keep it and do not, must reckon their neglect by maintaining of a poor man. And he who voluntarily dealeth better with the poor man than he is obliged, this shall be better for him. But if ye fast it will be better for you, if ye knew it."*

Roza

It is probable that Muhammad ordained the month of fasting in imitation of the Christian Lent. Ramadhán, the ninth month of the year, made sacred for ever by the descent of the Quran from highest heaven, to be revealed to the Angel Gabriel (who delivered it as required to the Prophet), is set apart for this religious

sacrifice. Every Mussulman is on the look-out for the first appearance of the new moon, sign of the beginning of the fast (the lunar year is followed), and from that evening for thirty days, from dawn until sunset neither food nor water is touched. When Ramadhán in the course of the years occurs in the hot season, the fast is terrible in its severity. Cloudless sky, scorching sun, burning winds, and not one drop of water to quench the awful thirst; and at the same time additional prayers, with the accompanying genuflections; this while the day's task must still be accomplished; it is a terrible test of the obedience and devotion of the Faithful. It is true that travellers, invalids, women nursing little children, and the weak, are exempt; but the fasts are supposed to be made up, and we have known many who have struggled through the month, who were quite unfit for it. The early morning and evening meal—

taken before dawn and after sunset—is not appetizing, for it is always composed of stale food.

I have never known any religious man or woman who regarded the fast as a hardship. "It is little we can do to serve God," said one woman. Little children plead to be allowed to fast. Boys and girls become utterly exhausted, parched and fainting, in homes where religious observances are faithfully kept.

### 4. ALMSGIVING.

Zakát

"*Forget not liberality among you, for God seeth that which ye do.*"

"*The Lord is surely in a watch-tower, whence he observeth the actions of men. Moreover man, when his Lord trieth him by prosperity, and honoureth him, and is bounteous to him, saith :—My Lord honoureth me ; but when he proveth him by afflictions, and withholdeth His provisions from him, he saith :—My Lord despiseth me. By no means ; but ye honour not the orphan, neither do ye excite one another to feed the poor ; and ye devour the inheritance of the weak, with undistinguishing greediness ; and ye love riches with much affection. . . .*

*"O thou soul which art at rest, return unto thy Lord, well pleased with thy reward, and well pleasing unto our God; enter among my servants, and enter Paradise."*

A fortieth part of the income belongs to the poor, and is, in Muslim lands, a compulsory tax. It is distinct from private almsgiving.

### 5. PILGRIMAGE.

Hajj *"They who shall disbelieve, and obstruct the way of God, and hinder men from visiting the holy temple at Mecca, which We have appointed for a place of worship unto all men: the inhabitant thereof and the stranger have an equal right to visit it."*

Islam is scattered in many lands; but the idea of Muhammad was of a universal Kingdom. The idea was never realized, but the grip of the master hand is felt to this day. Each of the duties of the Faith is a symbol of its unity; but the constraining symbol is the centralization at Mecca. This is the sole remaining sign of the great vision. Islam is far scattered; it is

broken into many sects ; there are language separations, and deeper racial separations ; but the whole unwieldy system and following is bound together by the Mecca pilgrimage, the least spiritual thing in the whole system. Muhammad made a brave battle for the unity and pure spirituality of God. But it was the deepest desire of his heart to win Mecca. He did so at the expense of his central belief. Mussulmans visit the idolatrous city to-day as they did in the long past idolatrous ages. The visible church of Islam is not a pure and beautiful and worthy mosque ; it is the old idolatrous stone of Mecca.

Every true Muslim is bound to visit Mecca at the least once in his lifetime.

### 6. SOCIAL MORALITY.

Social Morality

The social morality of Islam is—notwithstanding the marriage laws—very high, and is guided by such virtues as these :

modesty, honesty, kindness and brotherliness. When Muhammad fled from Mecca with his followers, and settled in Madina, the little community was a commonwealth, and that ideal has been retained in wonderful manner throughout the centuries and the far wanderings. There is no caste in Islam, neither the Eastern nor the Western form of that system. Each man stands in the same relation to the God Who rules him, and the consequent brotherhood is a very real thing. Poor and rich are not divided, to be poor is in itself a claim, and if a poor man comes to a rich man for aid, the rich man regards it as a favour. The laws of hospitality are most noble; strangers are assured in any Muslim house of a welcome, a meal, a rest, and if need be, even of clothing. Hospitality is an act of worship.

The aged are held in a beautiful reverence; the poor, and especially the orphan, is cared for as a religious duty; in

the home the patriarchal system still rules, the servant is a part of the family, and is treated with kindness.—Is he not a brother in the Faith ?

The position of woman remains as it was left by Muhammad thirteen hundred years ago—for there is no growth in Islam—and it is not easy to define it. On the one hand is the marriage law, which gives to the husband full power over his wife or wives ; on the other, the property law, which grants to a woman holding property in her own right, absolute control over it. In the latter respect, therefore, the law of Islam is in advance of the law of great Britain. I have known the curious anomaly of a woman whose person was at the mercy of a brutal drunken wretch, whom she yet held in some degree in check through his dependence upon her for the means with which to live his chosen life.

## The Solidarity of Islam.

*"They seek to extinguish God's light with their mouths; but God will perfect His light, though the infidels be averse thereto. It is He Who hath sent His Apostle with the direction, and the religion of truth, that He may exalt the same above every religion, although the idolators be averse thereto."*

There are two closely associated characteristics of Islam which impress every student :—the immovable *rigidity* which paralyzes individual action as well as social and religious progress and for ever holds its professors arrested at the stage and within the limit of Arab conditions as they were thirteen centuries ago; and the *solidarity* of the world of Islam as it exists to-day.

Rigidity

Solidarity

It is at this point that the contrast between the methods of Jesus and of

Muhammad is most sharply emphasized. The founder of Christianity neither wrote, nor left instructions for the preservation of His teachings; His method is best typified by His own favourite illustration; His message is a seed, growing of its own living life, mysteriously, silently, slowly, producing fruit after its kind indeed, but each several fruit during each several season drawing its own share of nourishment even as it drew its life directly from the root, original and distinct from any other. Muhammad spoke, in the most literal sense, the last word; the teaching has crystallized; principle and detail are alike unyielding.

Muhammad's Vision

Muhammad was a statesman as well as a poet; he had in view not only the conversion of the world to God and to himself, but also a world kingdom based upon the religious idea; and for the second end he worked possibly even "better than he knew."

Symbols of Solidarity:

1. Creed

2. Prayer

3. Quran

4. Fast

5. Pilgrimage

The study of the symbols of this bond of uniformity—not of union—is illuminating :—The *Creed*, binding to the God of Islam through the Apostle of that God ; the daily *Prayer Ritual:* it has been truly said that "each Muslim is a Church," it is no less true that the Muslim world is a Church, bound indissolubly by this uniform service of devotion ; the *Quran* and *Ramadhán*, the Book, and the Fast which commemorates the gift of the Book ; and above all, the *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, the local habitation of Islam, sublime notwithstanding the apparent foolishness of the ceremonial. "Thither the tribes go up," from Turkey, Syria, Persia, Afghanistan, India, China, Egypt and other North African lands, and Arabia herself. National distinctions are forgotten ; slave and master travel as brother worshippers ; Islam feels her solidarity through the far-seeing provision of the centralization of her religious life, in the city

which is sacred to the memory of the Apostle.

The fact that Islam is broken up into as many sects as is Christianity, does not affect this solidarity so greatly as might be supposed from the experience of Christianity ; in face of the Unbeliever the Faithful stand a solid army, the separations touch none of these symbols of unity. A solid army confronts the world. It has been asserted by one who knew Islam well, that the conversion to another Faith of an insignificant Muslim in an obscure village is known and mourned (or resented) over the whole Muslim world. However that may be, the solidarity of Islam is a grave and a suggestive fact ; and the Faith which hopes one day to win it, would do well to oppose the statesmanship of Muhammad with a statesmanship and a wisdom equal with his.

# II

# ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

When ye Pray, say—

*Father,*
*Hallowed be Thy Name.*
*Thy Kingdom come.*
*Give us day by day our daily bread.*
*And forgive us our sins: for we ourselves*
*also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*
*And bring us not into temptation.*

Amen.

The great Prayer of Christianity.

## I. Muhammad and Jesus.

"*Jesus is no other than a servant, Whom We have favoured with the gift of prophecy ; and We appointed Him for an example unto the children of Israel* (*if We pleased, verily We could from ourselves produce angels, to succeed you in the earth*), *and He shall be a sign of the approach of the last hour ; wherefore doubt not thereof.*"

"*O ye who have received the Scriptures, exceed not the just bounds of your religion, neither say of God other than the truth. Verily Jesus Christ the Son of Mary is the Apostle of God, and His Word Which He conveyed to Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him. Believe, therefore, in God and His apostles, and say not, There are three Gods. Forbear this. It will be better for you.*"

"*The Christians say, Christ is the son of God. This is their saying in their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who were unbelievers in former times. May God resist them. How are they infatuated, they take their priests and their monks for their lords, besides God and Christ the son of Mary ; although they are commanded to worship one God only : there is no God but He. Far be that from Him which they associate with Him. They seek to extinguish the light of God with their mouths ; but God willeth no other than to perfect His light, although the infidels be averse thereto.*"

There are in the Quran many references to our Lord Jesus Christ, but there is practically no historic knowledge. It must be remembered that in Muhammad's time there was no Arabic version of the Bible; he was therefore dependent for information upon the Jews and Christians with whom he came into contact. That he formed conclusions upon very insufficient knowledge is the terrible blunder of his life, of which full use has been made by Christian writers. Enough has not been made of the responsibility of the church which had no better tales to tell, no truer account to give, of their Lord and their Faith. The Christianity presented to this Seeker after God was painfully inadequate to his need.

The little Muhammad discovered led to his acknowledgment of the Jewish and Christian books, which he had never read, with reservations. It led also to a far more important admission. The Jesus of the Quran is denied Divinity, but the

character of Jesus did not fail of effect. All criticism is directed towards the professors of the Christian Faith, and their doctrines. This "son of Mary" is, in Muhammad's view, that which he never dreamt of claiming for himself, a man unstained by sin. Not only so, but titles and honours are yielded to Him little short of Divine :—He is *Masih*, the Messiah ; *Qaul-ul-Haqq*, the Word of Truth ; *Kalima*, the word ; He is "the Apostle of God to confirm the law, and to announce an Apostle who should come after Him, whose name should be Ahmad ;" He had near access to God, and was "illustrious in this world and the next."

Yet Muhammad supersedes Jesus Christ!

The Death of Jesus

There is another part of the problem of the rejection of our Lord ; the attitude of the Quran towards the Death of Jesus. The death upon the Cross is indignantly denied.

"*They have not believed on Jesus, and have spoken against Mary a grievous calumny; and have said, Verily*

*we have slain Christ Jesus the Son of Mary, the Apostle of God ; yet they slew Him not, neither crucified Him, but He was represented by one in His likeness ; . . . They did not really kill Him ; but God took Him up unto Himself ; and God is mighty and wise . . . on the day of resurrection He shall be witness against them.*"

It is said that Muhammad so hated the sign of the Cross, that if any article, however valuable, came into his possession bearing the mark, it was destroyed at once. The horror of the thought that Jesus should have died the abhorred death, or that God Himself should have permitted it, seems to be the argument against its having occurred. In the Quran that which is symbolized by the Cross—the approach of God to sinful man in mercy and love—is entirely lacking. There is no hint that the Christian Message of Atonement through the Gift of the Saviour's life to God in man's name had ever reached the Prophet. There is therefore no assurance, save the Prophet's word for it, that God upon His far Throne, hears, or hearing

answers and forgives the sin of His creatures ; there is no assurance of salvation in Islam.

It is a tragic story ; the responsibility for which it has been the habit of Christian writers to cast largely upon Muhammad. The apportionment of guilt is not so lightly determined.

## 2. The Father-God.

*"To me, I confess, it seems a very considerable thing, just to believe in God; difficult indeed to avoid honestly, and not easy to accomplish worthily; a thing not lightly to profess, but rather humbly to be sought; not to be found at the end of any syllogism, but in the inmost fountains of purity and affection; not the sudden gift of the intellect, but to be earned by a loving and brave life."*

*"I believe in God the Father Almighty."*

These simple, solemn, tender words contain the Christian Thought of God. In the one word "Almighty" is summed up Muhammad's idea of supreme Will and Power; the Christian prefixes a Name to the attribute which so governs the sphere of the exercise of that will and power that it is difficult to conceive that the two teachings represent the same Being.

Father-hood

In the view of Him to Whom we owe the Father Idea, the All of God and the All of His universe are summed up in the

Fatherhood ; that is, Jesus did not think of the al-might of God as exerted from without, the oneness of Creator and Created is in His view indissoluble. The birds could not maintain their little life, nor the lilies their delicate tints, without the Father ; and words fail Him to tell of the closeness of the Fatherly interest in each member of His nearer offspring. "*The very hairs of your head are numbered.*"

And when words have failed, He takes up His parable ; "*My Father worketh, and I work.*" The lifework of Jesus is, He tells us, the Father's work made visible. The Parable of Jesus

Gentle, healing Hands were laid upon the suffering ; sufficient food was provided for the hungry ; Feet, never weary, travelled hither and thither on errands of pity ; Arms were open to gather in the little children ; Eyes spoke of love and understanding where words missed their object ; happy human fellowship was

offered : and all was a parable of the work of the Father-God.

The Father-Gift

It was not a new thought to His hearers that the profoundest attribute of God is holiness, and that distinctions between right and wrong become acute in His presence ; but it was a revelation to which the world of men has not yet become accustomed that the Father is so set upon goodness in the children who had miserably failed of it, that no sacrifice was too great, *even for Him*, to secure it ; and that this austerity towards evil and purpose to subdue it, was the Father love in its highest exercise. In the Cross, symbol at once of man's sin and of His own grace, our Lord is still speaking the parable of the Father's "work." "The Father worketh, and I work." "God so loved the world that He gave"—Jesus.

Muhammad felt after God, and attained the idea of His apartness, aloneness, immensity.

Jesus knew God, and revealed to us that man had never been, and never could be, outside of God ; and that the only true home of man's spirit is in His presence, under His gracious rule ; for man and God are actually *akin*, first by nature, doubly so through His Revealer and our Brother, Jesus Christ. *Therefore*, *we* "*believe in God the Father Almighty*, AND *in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.*"

### 3. The Christian Life.

"*Christianity is the bearing in upon us of a character until we find the character irresistible.*"

The study of the Muslim ideal of life throws into prominence several too-rarely considered peculiarities of Christ's ideal life.

1. There is, in Christ's view, no division between the secular and the religious life. The beginning of His revelation of the Father's work was His meeting of a difficulty at a village wedding feast, which thereupon became a sacrament ; and from that

At-one-ment of Life

time onward we find no trace of any distinction in His own Life or in His teaching. To Him all life was sacred; and consisted in loyalty to the Father, and service of the brethren, one undivided duty. "Inasmuch," He taught, "as ye did your unconscious daily brotherly task, *you did it to Me;*" and "*I and the Father are One.*"

Freedom

2. The Christian view of life is one of perfect freedom. We are not slaves, but sons, and free. Free, that is, as children are; free of the Father's presence, gifts, love; free within the Family traditions; free, in sympathy with the Father to choose always the better and the best; without any suggestion of limit to the possibilities of the child nature. "*Perfect as the Father is perfect*" is Christ's own amazing word.

Progress

3. Freedom, and therefore progress, for each son in his own life, for each generation of sons according to the situation and the call. Not uniformity within the Brotherhood, but individuality within the limits of

the Family likeness, under the safe direction of the Spirit of the Father present with each one. The spaciousness of the Life-plan for every son of the Father cannot be exaggerated; there is no rigidity in Christianity.

Brotherhood

4. There is another Christian idea suggested by a study of Islam, which emerges from the last, the idea of the Brotherhood of the Father's children. This is of the very essence of Christianity as it is of Islam; but has never been carried into effect in the same magnificent way. There are various illustrations of this. The absence of all caste distinction in Muslim society, the kindly relations which exist between master and servant, rich and poor, Mussulmans of various races. Christianity has much to learn in these directions. Again, the desire to bring men within the Brotherhood is a passion with every true Muslim. "Every Mussulman is more or less of a missionary—that is, he intensely

The Missionary impulse

desires to secure converts from non-mussulman peoples . . . All the emotions which impel a Christian to proselytize are in a Mussulman, strengthened by all the motives which impel a political leader, and all the motives which sway a recruiting sergeant, until proselytism has become a passion, which whenever success seems practicable and especially success on a large scale, develops in the quietest Mussulman a fury of ardour which induces him to break down every obstacle, his own strongest prejudices included, rather than stand for an instant in a neophyte's way." * Until the same imperialism—the word is hackneyed, but best conveys the idea—has seized the Christian imagination and conscience, the children of the Father will not have proved worthy of their name; for He loved and longed after the world of men, and His children should one and all do likewise.

* Meredith Townsend, in *Asia and Europe.*

## 4. The Failure of Christianity.

"*We do not see God's preparations.*"

The lack of the Imperialist vision set before the Faithful by Christ has been the weakness of Christendom during long periods of her history. There have indeed been imperialisms—as in the great hierarchical systems—but they have been of the order of World-power visions which Christ definitely rejected, and they were foredoomed to failure, so far as He was concerned.

The Kingdom Vision

The Vision of Christ has nothing material in it, it relates itself at no point with the World. He compares it continually to the little seed fallen into the ground, dying to live, growing silently from within of the power of its own mysterious hidden life; observation hardly discloses its growth; but as surely as comes the harvest of the farmer, with its thirty — sixty — hundred-fold result, so

surely shall come the Kingdom of the Father.

The Church

The Church, as the visible responsible organ of the mystic Brotherhood, to which it fell to carry out the Purpose of the Kingdom, and to present the idea of solidarity and continuity from age to age, has, as we acknowledge in thoughtful moods, pitifully failed of this mission. She is stately and impressive, but nineteen centuries have not been sufficient to win this little world for the Father.

There are many reasons for this failure. Notably, the Church is in the world, and has been greatly influenced by world methods.

> "The world is still deceived by ornament,"

and the Church has tended to concentrate her energies upon such details of her task as yield most rapid and visible results; results which too often have small relation to the object in view. She has also wasted much energy upon the

mere machinery of her task. There is truth in the severe words of Dr. Martineau, "Christ came to bring fire upon earth; and His disciples after eighteen centuries are still discussing the best patent match to get it kindled." "On furlough," remarked a missionary, "one is overwhelmed by the complexity, and the labour, and the roar of Church machinery. I suppose it is all needful, but one dreads that the means may loom so large that the end shall be forgotten."

Comparison with Islam

The story of Islam, the Church which has grown up side by side with the Church of Christ, is laden with suggestions upon this subject of the failure of the latter to bring in the Kingdom of the Father. One or two of these only can be noted.

1. Reference has already been made to several of the most noteworthy; *e.g.*, the reality of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the easily-kindled missionary ardour; to the same category belongs another striking fact.

The Muslim is never ashamed to confess His faith. His devotion to God and his loyalty to the Prophet are not matters too sacred for conversation. They are his deepest life, wherefore should he shun reference to them? When as much can be said of the members of each Christian Church, much will be gained.

> "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
> Or to defend His cause."

2. Islam is broken up into some two hundred sects; Christianity into as many, or more. The family feuds have, in each case, been fiercely maintained. But, at the call—"*Fight for the religion of God*," Islam rallies as one man, a solid front is offered to the enemies of the Faith. Just at this point, once again, Christianity has failed. The family feud is carried into the enemy's country, and weakens the aggressive warfare, as only those who have taken part in that warfare can tell.

3. The solidarity of societies is a

rarely realized but very solemn fact. The Church of Christ cannot divide herself into portions, and fling responsibilities from division to division, from age to age. Whether consciously or not, when one member suffers all suffer, when one member sins sin has come upon all; and history teaches no lesson more plainly than that the harvest of the deeds of one generation is reaped by another. Thus, the most solemn lesson provided by the story of Islam is contained in the very existence of Islam. A disloyal Church presented a false Faith to one of the most earnest Seekers after God who has ever gone forth upon the great Quest; and the Church has spent much wrath upon the "false Prophet" who has ever since been her greatest opponent. But she has never fairly faced her sin, nor acknowledged that the Islam of to-day is to all intents the harvest of the seed of false doctrine she sowed thirteen centuries ago. To discuss the

truth or the falsehood of Muhammad's claim will be the task of Islam when she is brought face to face with the true Christ; it is beside the mark for the Church of Christ. To her falls the far more awful duty of wiping out as best she may, and at whatever cost, the darkest blot which has marred her long history. Can it be that her Lord cannot largely own her aggressive work done in His Name, until the wrong has been righted?

# III

# THE COMING BATTLE

"*Fight for the religion of God, and know that God is He Who heareth and knoweth.*"

Muhammad.

"*Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations . . . and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*"

Jesus Christ.

## The Coming Battle.

Islam and Christianity are not sister religions, as some would have us believe. The very existence of Islam is a challenge to Christianity; and since Muhammad sent out his missionary armies, the two Faiths have been constant rivals and enemies. All apologists of any weight on both sides acknowledge the mutual exclusion of Christ and Muhammad. Nothing is gained on either side by denial of this position.

History has corroborated this view only too literally. In Muslim lands those bearing the Christian name have suffered and do suffer in proof of it. "*To remain a Christian*," writes Mrs. King Lewis, in her book—'Critical Times in Turkey, and England's Responsibility,'—"*means to*

*court death in some terrible manner.*" The best that can be said of other lands is that there is an armed neutrality.

The two antagonists must one day meet; and the war, on the one side at least, will be a religious war. It will be a terrible war, waged at fearful cost. It could hardly be otherwise, for the wrongs to be avenged on either side are deep and of long standing.

It is a saying with Mussulmans that Christianity fears to meet Islam. Missionaries in Arabia have been taunted with the fact that parties of two or three men are sent by the Church of Christ to convert Arabia, and the inference is drawn that the older Faith dares not seriously to confront the younger. Some colour is given to the reproach by the fact that Christian Europe dares not to confront the moribund Turkish Empire in defence of those who bear the Christian name.

The question of Christianity is, whether

the inevitable war shall be primarily or entirely a war of the nations, bloody and disastrous; or whether it is not possible even yet for the Church to unite her forces, and to meet the common enemy with a frank avowal of the first wrong, and an offer, belated indeed, but now earnest and sincere, of the knowledge of Christ.

The approach of Christian to Mussulman must always be a difficult and delicate task. He is prepossessed against Christ, he cannot believe that Christianity is other than a polytheistic Faith, "The very bells of the churches ring, Jesus, Mary; Jesus, Mary," said a Muslim woman. Disdain of the Prophet rouses his bitterest antagonism. Discussions and arguments end as they began.

But there is a soul of honour in him, and a fair approach meets, as a rule, with a fair response. "You have read the Quran? Bring me a Bible," said a bigotted Muslim woman to the writer.

"Shall we talk the matter quietly over? Tell me of your Faith, and of what it means to you; and will you give me also a hearing?" Such an appeal rarely fails; and if Christ and His message be fairly introduced, the result may safely be left with Him.

THE END

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